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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

"Blind Ethan is coming." Page 6.

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Blind Ethan.

A STORY FOR BOYS.

BOSTON:

HENRY HOYT,

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BLIND ETHAN.

A company of play-loving boys was gathered on the village green, one bright Saturday afternoon. Robert Stevens was there with his gutta percha ball, for which he had just paid twenty-five cents. William Thorn with a bat, which his father had labored the greater part of the morning to fashion; while Harry Moore rejoiced in the ownership of a new ball, which, though not gutta percha, was quite valuable in his estimation, as it was the joint manufacture of his mother and himself, from an old stocking and some bits of leather.

Besides the above mentioned lads, were several others, all with sunny faces, spark-

ling eyes and animated tones. Probably, the principal thing which made them look and feel happy, was, that every one of the number had obtained permission from their parents to spend the afternoon on the common. Had it not been so, conscience, that voice of God within, which admonishes when we do wrong, would have intruded its accusing tone into the midst of their enjoyment.

"That's a good hit, Willie." "Your ball bounds famously, Harry." "You are alway sure to aim right, Robert." Such were a portion of the exclamations that echoed from the playground.

While the lads were running to and fro in their merry sport, a carriage containing a gentleman and lady, descended the hill, at the foot of which lay the common. It was a pleasant sight to look upon, that company of boys, who were playing as if

there were no care or sorrow in the world, and probably the travellers thought so, for they stopped the horse to linger upon the scene, The gentleman held the reins with a loose grasp, while he leaned forward in the carriage; his mind, perchance, reverting to his early years, when he was young, mirthful, and free from business perplexities, like those on whom he gazed.

The poet tells us, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." Heaven might always be near us, yea, within us, while we travelled through this world if we willed it so; but the cares of life, which gather with the lapse of years, too often render the eye of faith dim, so that we perceive not the brightness which is reflected from regions beyond the sky. The gentleman's contemplations were of this character, while he viewed the scene from his carriage. He was rich, honored, influential; still he would

have relinquished wealth, power, and position, could he thereby become a boy again, playing with those boys on the village green; in the possession of that confiding faith in God and man which the young heart feels ere it learns to distrust.

Not long after the gentleman's departure, a visitor, quite different in aspect, appeared on the play ground. Tall in person, with a hesitating step and bowed head, never raised to behold the sky or sun, and a face devoid of any expression which bespoke sympathy with his race; such was the individual who now moved towards the group of boys. At times he put out his hand as if to shield himself from some fancied danger — an act which was sufficient to reveal his blindness, even without the presence of the little dog who led him by a string.

"Blind Ethan is coming," whispered Willie Thorne, and the lads unconsciously

leaned on their bats and held their balls unused in their hand, to watch the movements of the poor man. Guided by his dog, he passed on with scarcely a response to their greeting, until he found a shady place under an elm, where he sat down on the ground. Young voices are wont to cause a thrill of gladness in the breast of age, yet, when Ethan heard the merry shouts, his face became more repulsive and his heart more discontented. Why were they, youthful and happy, enjoying the blessing of sight, one of the Creator's best gifts to man, while he was poor and miserable, unable to see the sun that shown upon his path? Thus he murmured at the allotments of Providence, his mental vision more in the darkness than his closed eyes.

Harry Moore approached him with the generous offer of part of his luncheon, and Robert Stevens, who had no luncheon with

him, slipped a half dime into the withered hand that lay on the dog's head, still, instead of thanking them, or the God who had put kind thoughts into their hearts, Ethan took the food and money without the least emotion of gratitude for either. He sat there through the afternoon, changing his place only when the sun moved farther to the west, and threw its beams into his face, all the while thinking himself the most wretched of all the dwellers upon earth. When the boys tried to talk with him, he either repelled their advances or answered in gruff tones; accordingly they desisted from their attempts and left him to his thoughts. Even then, he complained that their loud tones had disturbed him, and their merriment made his head ache.

At length the elms cast a lengthened shadow across the commons, and the boys began to speak about going home. This

word caused Ethan another pang, for he had no home where he could go, unless we call the old hovel by the brook, home, where he lived with his dog Fido. Home is a sweet word, linked with associations of domestic comfort, together with loving tones and smiles of welcome, yet, there was neither of these at the rude hut, which Ethan tenanted. Since his mother's death, thirty years before, he had dwelt in solitude, refusing to become an inmate of the almshouse, though dependent upon the neighbors, who would not let him suffer for the charities of life.

"Fido is growing old, Ethan," said Harry Moore, who noticed that the dog tugged wearily at the string, when his owner rose to go. "You'll have to get another dog soon."

"He'll last as long as I shall, may be," responded the blind man, whose love for

the dumb creature that led him about was the strongest affection of his nature.

"I don't believe he'll live through another winter," rejoined Harry. "The boys talked about it while you were sitting under the tree, and when they saw how he panted after his walk in the sun, some of them said, it would not be strange if you did not have him a month longer."

Harry little knew the effect produced by his communication. The blind man's heart rose in rebellion against his fate. It was not enough that he was poor, blind, and miserable, without a friend in the whole world to care for him, but Fido. Not enough, that some days he had little to eat, and that little the crumbs which fell from the table of another. Not enough, that he walked in darkness always, without one glimpse of the sky and stars, the trees and flowers. This was all hard to be borne, but now he must

lose his dog, the friend that kept him out of danger, shared his homely fare, walked with him by the way, staid with him in his lonely dwelling.

"Fido," he cried out, in bitterness of spirit, when these reflections passed through his mind.

The dog responded to his call by coming close to him and licking his hand.

"True enough," mused Ethan, "Fido is old. He used to spring up, and put his paws on my shoulder when I spoke to him; but, I suppose, he is too feeble for that now. He will die before long, and what shall I do then?"

It was a long time since Ethan had wept, indeed, the fountain of tears was apparently congealed at his mother's death; still, when he thought of parting with Fido, the sorrow to his heart sent great drops welling up from his eyes

Occupied by thoughts of this character, he sat down on the ground by the stone wall; alike, regardless of the falling dew and of Fido, who pulled the string, conscious that it was time to go home. He might have sat there much longer, had not the step of Jem Wilkins, attracted his attention. When our heavenly Father takes away one blessing, He often bestows another in its place; so, the withdrawal of sight, is sometimes followed by more acute susceptibilities of hearing. Ethan recognized Jem's step, and as he was ashamed to be found crying, he rose from the ground in readiness to start in the direction of home.

"Well, Ethan," thus began a cheerful voice, in which was no guile, "sitting on the ground does not cook supper, so suppose you go home with me, and get a bite of something to eat, and a cup of tea, to make you feel bright and lively."

Though Jem was not rich, he was accustomed to say, he did not believe the good God, who feeds the ravens, would ever let him feel the need of an occasional meal, given to a poor blind man. Our friend Jem, was correct in his views. He could not bestow the alabaster box of ointment, very precious, as a token of his love to the Redeemer; still, the more humble offering, made in the name of our Saviour, would not lose its reward.

Ethan accepted the invitation; there was not much food in his larder, besides the proffer of Mary Wilkins' odorous cup of tea was an inducement not to be resisted. He also supposed there would be nothing at the Wilkins' to make him sad by a contrast with his own situation. Jem was obliged to earn his daily bread by hard labor; moreover he was not young like the lads whose merry laughter on the common had caused so many envious throbs.

Before Ethan reached Jem's door, the old discontented feeling came back with power enough to make him wish himself at home, even at the sacrifice of his supper. There were hurrying steps on the greensward, then little forms pressed round good Jem Wilkins, and young voices shouted joyfully, "father has come."

"You are late, father," was the greeting of Jennie. Ethan knew her by her tone so like the carol of a bird.

"You are late, father," echoed Dick in a voice more like a trumpet. "Jennie and I have been watching for you at the gate ever so long."

Jem pressed Jennie's rosy face to his sunburnt one for a kiss, clasped Dick's hand in his own, with an unspoken thanksgiving to God for these household treasures such as wealth can never buy. "Not ever so long, Dick," he responded cheerily; "I

am only fifteen minutes behind the time, and you recollect I told you at noon I must stop at the store on my walk home to get some coffee and sugar for mother."

Who that saw Jem's elastic tread or heard his joyous tones, would have imagined he had just come from a hard day's work at the blacksmith's shop? He seldom thought of it himself, and when he did he said his labor was a fit preparation to enjoy the rest that followed at the close of the day.

His kindness of heart was all lost upon Ethan, whose thoughts had gone to his dreary hut, where never the music of a loving voice greeted him on his return. Why did Jem Wilkins have somebody to care for him, while he himself was without a friend in the world but Fido, and this one was going to die and leave him?

"These are good biscuits," said Jem, af-

ter the family had sat down to supper. "Mary always makes good biscuit. You must let me butter one for you, Ethan." "Mind and pour out Ethan a nice cup of tea, Mary," was soon added. "Recollect he don't have such tea as your's every night."

All these kindnesses should have softened Ethan's heart, and filled it with gratitude to his hospitable friends, and to God who, though he had made them poor in silver and gold, had also rendered them rich in faith, love, and good works. Still no such effect was produced. On the contrary, he repined, because Jem Wilkins had such tea and biscuit; such a home where love dwelt, while he had only an occasional taste of the good things of this life. He forgot the care that had been over him all the years he had walked in darkness, supplying his wants and permitting no evils to befall him.

"Hav'nt you got a bone for Fido, Mary? He has been so patient that he ought to have something now," said Jem, when he rose from the table.

"Nothing will starve where Jem is," responded Mary, with a smile. "I believe he would go without food himself rather than let the dog or cat be pinched."

With these words she placed a plate containing fragments of meat and vegetables before the dog. Though Fido did not always have meat for supper, he seemed in no haste to devour the savory portion. He turned it over with his teeth, attempted to gnaw the most tender side, licked the plate with his tongue, and finally made his meal of a cold potato.

"Fido is failing," observed Jem. "I noticed it when we were walking home, but I thought he might have been out in the hot sun. You can't depend on him to lead you about much longer, Ethan."

"It just so with everything that belongs to me and always has been," soliloquized the blind man on his way homeward. "I had two as good eyes as other people, before they were put out with the powder. Then when I had got a little used to my blindness, my mother died, and since then there has been no kind of comfort for me. The old house leaks every time it rains, and in winter it is as much as I can do to keep from freezing. I am so blind I might fall into a pit or run against a post, if it was'nt for Fido, and now everybody I meet tells me Fido is giving out?

The sound of carriage wheels behind him had no power to banish his mental discontent, for Ethan possessed one of those unhappy temperaments which, in the language of the poet, "wither at another's joy." Some person was riding while he, a blind man was plodding along on his feet.

On came the carriage nearer and nearer, until he could distinguish the rapid steps of Esq. Richmond's horse, Lightfoot. Esq. Richmond was in the vehicle, Ethan could recognise his voice in conversation with his wife.

The blind man's thoughts now reverted to his early boyhood, when he and the rider were children together. Those days were far away in the past, their brightness strangely contrasting with the gloom of the present. Again he murmured at the hardships of his lot, which seemed greater than before, when compared with Esq. Richmond's ease and luxury. Eyes to see with, troops of friends, money in abundance, servants at his bidding, horses and carriages at his command, a pleasant home furnished with every comfort—such were the blessings of his former playmate, while blindness, poverty, and desolation were the portions of his cup.

A miserable evening ensued, followed by a still more wretched night. Ethan's unquiet mind would have banished sleep from his pillow had there been no war of the elements to disturb his slumbers. The clouds gathered blackness, winds shrieked in fury, lightnings darted across the sky, and thunders with their terrific voices reverberated among the hills. Ethan covered his head with the tattered quilt, yet he could not shut out those fearful sounds. They were echoes from the throne of the Omnipotent; he knew that, though he knew but very little of the divine attributes, enough to make him fear and tremble, not enough to make him look up and trust.

Thus one hour and then another passed away; the rain falling from the leaky roof on his face, the boards of his frail hut rattling in the wind, and the thunder blending its deep cadence with the gale. There was

something in the scene which made Ethan long for sympathy, yet all the sympathy he could have was an occasional growl from Fido, who crouched at his feet on the bed. He thought more seriously during that shower than he had thought for years. His whole life, frittered away without aim or purpose, came up for sober retrospection, until he began to query what he was made for, and why he was spared, since he was no comfort to himself, or use to anybody. Others had asked the same questions concerning him, and the week before, when Charles Rivers, the young, active, devoted follower of Christ, was suddenly taken to his heavenly home, there were those who arraigned the divine Wisdom in thus removing one who could do some good service in the world, and leaving blind Ethan, a mere cumberer of the ground.

With morning dawn the shower passed

away, and earth awoke to new gladness and beauty. Rain drops glittered on the grass, sunlight danced on the leaves, and the birds, God's choral band, tuned their anthems in his praise. Ethan heard their strains as he stood in the threshold of his hut, and because he felt wretched and gloomy himself, he wondered what cause they had to make their little throats swell with melody. Had he been a reader of the thrilling lays of the sweet singer of Israel, he would have known. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

The sound of the village bell wafted on the still air, a sound that has fallen soothingly on many hearts, now appraised Ethan that it was the Sabbath. Not wishing to be seen he left the doorway and sat in the interior of his hut, because he knew people

would so pass on on their way to church. Harry Moore and his mother were the first. Ethan had not forgotten those frank, boyish tones, notwithstanding he did not thank Harry for his luncheon, the previous day. Not far behind were Jem Wilkins and Mary, accompanied by Jennie and Dick, the latter's voice modulated to unwonted gentleness out of reverence to the sacred character of the day. Then there were other steps, all tending in the same direction, and lastly, Esq. Richmond's horse, Lightfoot, who knew the way to church so well that he always wanted to stop on week-days, when he reached the post where his master tied him on the Sabbath.

Ethan was weary of his cottage, weary of his own thoughts, which were anything but agreeable companions; so soon after Lightfoot had passed by, he started for a walk, without caring whether his steps

should incline. But our heavenly Father who watched over the sparrows, also watched over the blind man, whose soul was of more value than many sparrows, and led him by a way that he knew not. Ethan plodded up the hill slowly, for neither Fido nor himself were very swift walkers, then down the hill again, next across the common where the boys played the afternoon before, and finally stopped to rest in the shadow of a tree that threw its branches over the church.

He took off his hat to cool his brow, heated by his tiresome walk, when the notes of a hymn, sung by the worshippers in the sanctuary, fell upon his ear. Instinctively he drew nearer to listen until he could distinguish the words:

"My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing itself away,
To everlasting bliss."

To these words, familiar to almost every Sabbath School child in our land, Ethan was a stranger, and still more a stranger to the inspiriting sentiment contained in the stanza. He had never been in a frame of mind in which he wished to stay, but, on the contrary, his whole life had been a prolonged scene of gloom and discontent. Everlasting bliss too, it must be worth having, but what was it, and how could it be attained? Could he get it, he, poor, blind Ethan, who scarcely knew what happiness meant?

Moved by these thoughts, which were the breathings of the Holy Spirit in his darkened soul, he ascended the church steps. accompanied by Fido, who, perhaps, might have made some resistance had he not been too old and feeble. There was an interval of lingering in the entry, a period of doubt and hesitation ere he could summon courage

to enter, when some words which he heard through the open door excited his interest, and he went into the church to hear the message of him, who, when on earth, was the blind man's friend. Harry Moore and his mother sat near the entrance, and when the former saw Ethan, he did not need his mother's look of intelligence to lead him to a seat.

It was such a strange sight to witness the blind man in the house of God, that, for a time, more eyes were directed towards him than to the minister. Happily unconscious of the gaze, he sat with his sightless orbs turned in the direction of the speaker, literally receiving into his soul the truths which were uttered. Harry Moore had been uneasy before Ethan's entrance, and when he thought his mother did not see him, he took his Sabbath School book with the intention of perusing its pages. Re-

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proved by the fixedness of his companion's attention, he lay down the volume, and began to listen to the minister.

The sermon was about Jesus Christ and his great love to the human race, which caused him to leave the abodes of glory, take upon himself the burden of humanity, be exposed to trial and temptation like one of us, then offer his life as a sacrifice for ours, and die on the cross to atone for our transgressions. This was all new to Ethan, who, though a dweller in a Christian land, knew as little about the Saviour who died to redeem us, as the idolater bowing down to gods of wood and stone—stone which his own hands have formed. Leaning forward in his accustomed position, with his head supported by his right arm, the tears gushed from his closed eyes as the speaker proceeded. The love and condescension manifested alike in the life and death of Jesus,

—were they not wonderful? Ethan thought so, poor, blind Ethan, whose life was all passed in shadow, without a star to light his way.

There have been blind men—Milton was one—to whom Heaven has been opened, and the glories of the eternal world revealed, who, though their earthly path has been in darkness, have caught glimpses of the radiance which surrounds the throne of God, and—can we say it without treading on sacred ground?—of the Holy One who sitteth among the cherubim. Ethan knew nothing of this; his weak mind could not have understood it, but he could understand the love of Jesus. Let us thank God that no depth of intellect is needed to comprehend the Saviour's mission upon earth. God in his immensity, dwelling in light unapproachable and full of glory, would have been a theme too exalted for him to take

in, but God manifested in the flesh, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, weeping with Martha and Mary at the tomb of Lazarus, could be comprehended and loved.

Do we not sometimes make a mistake in our endeavors to lead others to believe in the religion of the cross? Do we not bewilder them by the heights and depths of our faith, the hidden things which belong to God, instead of unfolding the simple truth as it is in Jesus?

There was an allusion to blind Bartimeus in the course of the sermon, him who sat by the wayside begging. Ethan listened with so much earnestness that he half rose in his seat, and perhaps he would have stood erect, had he not been checked by Harry Moore. His tears flowed fast when the preacher uttered those words, "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee." It was joy to know the blind man's eyes were

opened, and then Ethan wished that Jesus could now be present, to touch his own sealed lids with a ray of light. Still the knowledge, that this desire could not be gratified, since Jesus had ascended into heaven, gave him no pain as it would have done the day before, so completely had the thought of a Saviour's love absorbed all minor considerations. Christ on the cross, dying for sinners, praying with his last breath, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," this assurance was bliss, and though tears still flowed freely, they were soft, cooling drops, unlike the bitter ones shed in anticipation of Fido's death. Ethan did not inquire whether Christ died for him; he was too simple-hearted to doubt it, as perhaps you do, my reader, when you should receive the blessed truth into your heart, and accept him as your Saviour.

When the services were concluded, Ethan walked quietly away with Fido, engrossed by the subject which had been presented to his mind. Though the sun shone into his face during the greater part of the way home, he thought neither of the heat nor the walk, in contemplation of the surpassing love which constrained the sinless Son of God, to atone for a guilty world. Esq. Richmond, rode by him in his easy carriage, probably with pity for the poor blind man who used to be his playmate when both were children. Ethan did not need his pity then, much as he needed it a few hours previous, because he had found the Saviour, the only Friend who could go with him through the dark paths of this life, and finally guide him across that river which must be passed by all of us, before entrance can be gained to the region of eternal light beyond.

Harry Moore ventured to accost Ethan on the way home; recollecting how coldly his advances were repulsed the preceding day, he expected the same treatment at the present time. Much to his surprise a cordial answer was returned, and when the two reached the cottage by the brook; Harry was invited to enter.

"Couldn't I do something for you, Ethan?" the lad inquired after a glance round the comfortless room. It was a part of his nature to wish to act for the benefit of others. "Perhaps I could shake up the bed or put things in place a little, because you can't see to do it."

"It is no matter about the bed or other things," was the response; "I'm used to it, and I shouldn't know where to find what I want if you began to fix up."

Harry was disappointed, and his gaze wandered from the littered hearth to the

spider's web which festooned the window, wondering how any one could be contented to live in a place so devoid of comfort.

Ethan's next words, changed the current of his thoughts. "Can you read," was the inquiry now propounded.

"Yes;" was the reply, rather scornfully given, for Harry did not think such a question necessary to be asked, "I could do that when I was six years old."

"Then read to me in the book that tells about Jesus; what will do me more good than if you made my bed a hundred times."

Providentially Harry's little Testament was in his pocket, so he read the life-giving message, while Ethan listened as if fearing to lose a word.

"Wasn't he good!" exclaimed the latter, interrupting the reader. How could they help loving him. Oh! Harry, why have I lived so long without knowing about Jesus?"

Harry was unable to answer these questions; though the story of the Saviour was familiar to him, it awoke no responsive throb, caused no warm gushing out of the heart, and he looked at Ethan with surprise, unable to interpret his emotions.

How much externals take their coloring from the hue of our own thoughts? When Ethan lay in his bed at night, he was no longer disposed to consider himself the most miserable person in existence. The shingles of his dilapidated hut, again rattled in the nightwind, his home was desolate, and he knew it would always be so; he was poor, blind, and becoming older every day, still rising above all these, was the presence of Jesus, a shelter from the storm, a friend that never would forsake. Happy Ethan! what would his blindness, poverty, or loneliness be, when he arrived safely home in heaven?

Were there no doubts of his acceptance, no fears lest his robe of unrighteousness had not been made white in the blood of the Lamb, do you ask, my reader, you, who have vainly tried to render yourself better, instead of washing in that fountain which cleanses from all sin, you, who have sought to work out your own salvation, instead of trusting entirely to Him who came to seek and save the lost? No, the little child does not distrust its parents; and why should we doubt the promise of our heavenly Father?

A stormy week followed, and Ethan's rheumatism, probably increased by exposure to dampness in his hut, did not permit him to go out until Saturday. The boys were again on the common, busy with bat and ball, when he took his former place under the elm with Fido by his side.

"Oh! dear," sighed Willie Thorne,

"there's blind Ethan again. I wish he wouldn't come here, he is so cross. He spoilt all our fun last week by finding fault if we spoke loud, or laughed, or did anything but fret and worry like him. If he were not blind, I would tell him we did not want him here."

"I don't want him for one," added Robert Stevens. "When I went to pat Fido last week, he told me, he didn't want boys to meddle with his dog. I wonder, if he forgot my sister Carrie bought Fido on purpose for him, ever so many years ago. He need not be cross, if he is blind."

"I don't believe he will be cross to-day," interposed Harry Moore, and then he lent his ball to Amos Holt, a poor boy who had no money to buy and no mother to make him one, while he went to speak to Ethan.

The boys were surprised to see the latter press his hand caressingly over Harry's

dark locks, yet, not as surprised as they were half an hour afterwards, when Ethan rose from his seat, and came where they were playing. They might have thought his motives was to complain of their noise, had not his countenance worn a peaceful expression.

"I declare boys," he began with a smile, —it was rare to see a smile on his haggard face, — "I have almost forgotten that I am old and blind, since I have been here in the sound of your happy voices. It makes me feel as I used to, when I played on this same spot fifty years ago.

Fifty years ago! then Ethan could see once, though when the boys looked at him, they imagined, he must have been old and blind always.

"What made you blind, Ethan," inquired Robert Stevens, who had a strange fancy for tracing the relation of cause and effect.

"Dont ask him," interposed Willie Thorne in a whisper. "Mother says, it makes him downright angry to have that question asked."

Contrary to Willie's expectations, Ethan manifested no appearance of displeasure on account of the query.

"I will tell you, my boy," he replied, pressing his hands over his sightless orbs, "If you will sit down with Fido and me, in the shade."

As the sun was hot, the boys were willing to relinquish their play for the prospect of a story. Let us go with them, for we too may gather wisdom from the lips of a blind man.

"I could see as well as anybody once," began Ethan, "though I cannot tell the difference between day and night now. I recollect the color of the sky, and trees, and grass, and I thought when I walked

along the road this afternoon, I should like to look at them all once more, because God made them; I did not think so when I used to see them every day, or about anything that was good. I did not like to go to school, and when I was there, it seemed very hard to sit still and spell out words; so I got into the habit of running about the fields, and idling away my time, when I ought to have been busy with my book. One morning Obed Bowker, a boy considerably older than I was, wanted me to go with him to shoot robins. My mother most always let me have my own way, but this time she said, she was not going to have me neglect school any more, besides, she was afraid I might get into some kind of trouble, if I meddled with guns or powder."

Ethan paused here. It was a long time since he had thought or spoken of his early transgression, and strange emotions awoke with the memory.

"Did you go?" inquired Willie Thorne, perhaps fearful he might lose the remainder of the story, if the narrator were not helped along.

"Yes; I went, but I took my spelling-book in my hand to make mother believe I was going to school, and when I got to the first bars beyond the brook, I put my book into an old, decayed apple tree, and ran across the field to a place where Obed had agreed to wait for me. I recollect I pulled clover heads as I went along, and tried to make out which were prettiest, the red or the white. I never looked at clover again, never.

"What happened there, Ethan," inquired Willie with a very sober face.

"I lost my eyes," was the rejoinder. "When Obed aimed at the birds the gun would not go off because the powder was damp; when we made a fire on a flat

rock in the pasture, and spread the powder near enough to feel the heat. I always wanted to meddle, so when Obed's back was turned, I took a few grains of the dangerous stuff and tried to make it flash. This pleased me so much, that I took more in my hand and threw it into the fire; it became dark as night then, all in a minute, and boys, though I kept expecting daylight to come back, it never did. The men who carried me home said, if I had gone to school as mother told me, I might have saved my eyesight."

Ethan's simple narration was the most emphatic commentary on disobedience, to which the lads ever listened. Willie Thorne, made a practical application of it to his own conduct. Would that there were more who, like Willie, profit by the sad experience of others!

"I don't think I shall go with you to the

mill-pond for a bath, Robert," he said in a low tone, evidently fearful of being overheard. "You know father forbade me, because he does not consider it a safe place for boys."

"But you did not mean to let him know you are going, and he never will, unless you are foolish enough to tell him yourself, and of course, you would not do that," was Robert Stevens' rejoinder.

Willie wavered; perhaps he might have yielded, had he not looked up and seen blind Ethan walk away from the common, with Fido leading him by the string. No words of warning could have been more forcible than those closed eyes, and feeble steps.

"I will not go," was his decided response. "I will not disobey my father."

"Nor I either," said Robert seriously. "Willie," he inquired the minute after, "do you suppose, Ethan knew what we had

planned to do, when he told us that story about losing his eyes?"

"God knew it whether Ethan did or not," interposed Harry Moore.

Yes, my reader, God knows the secret purpose veiled from human eye. Shall not this thought deter us from the path of transgression?

When Ethan approached Jem Wilkins' cottage on his return, he heard the voice of its owner in the garden. Jem was gathering cherries with Dick and Jennie to help, though if Ethan's eyes had not been closed, he would have seen that the children put more of the delicious fruit into their mouths than into the basket. Their mirthful tones were very pleasant to the ear, especially when some mammoth cherry from thefather's hand hit Jennie's cheek or Dick's forehead. Ethan leaned against the face, thinking how much happiness there is in the

world, and how good the Great God is thus to care for his creatures.

"Halloo, Ethan," shouted Jem, who had spied the blind man from his perch in the cherry tree. "Come in, and we'll have a rare treat; cherries first, and supper afterward."

Dick and Jennie both looked grave when Ethan accepted the invitation. They were so accustomed to kind looks and loving tones that they dreaded his presence, nor were they reassured until he called Jennie, "Little Bird," and gave Dick permission to play with Fido. When the family gathered around the supper table, Ethan bowed his head in reverence, while Jem thanked God for food, an act which surprised Mary so much that she forgot to pour out tea, until reminded of the neglected duty by her husband.

"It has been a rainy week, Ethan," re-

marked Jem. "I suppose you have had a wet time with your leaky roof." Jem recollected former complaints on this score.

"I never minded it a bit," was the answer. "Harry Moore moved my bed to the other side of the room, and I have kept as comfortable as a king, through it all."

Even good Jem, with his contented mind, could not forbear a smile at the comparison. It was a fit one nevertheless, for a king on his throne, unless he had the King of kings for his friend, was less to be envied than blind Ethan, since he had found the Savior

"Everybody is good to me," was soon resumed. "Mrs. Thorne sent me a couple of shirts, and Esq. Richmond bought me bread and meat enough to last Fido and me for some time yet; it don't take much for Fido, now his teeth are poor. Better than all the rest, the minister came to see me in midst of the rain. He kneeled down with

me and prayed"—here the tears came;—"he told me about Jesus and that world where there is no night, because he makes it light."

Mary Wilkins' tender heart was touched, to hear blind Ethan talk thus, and Jem drew his hand across his eyes to brush away the moisture. Perhaps he was rebuked for his own unbelief in previously thinking his visitor beyond the power of God's grace to save. In common with other kind persons in the neighborhood, he had strangely neglected Ethan's soul, as if it did not transcend the whole world in value, and been careful to minister to the wants of the poor, perishing body.

"Every body is good to me, and I take a great deal of comfort in thinking so when I am alone," reiterated blind Ethan, as he rose to go home. "I used to think people were selfish and hard hearted, and did'nt

care for a lone, old fellow like me. But it was not so; they were looking after me and sending me things all the time, and I was the selfish one myself, though I was a long time finding it out."

How true it is, that he who loves God will love his brother man also! The heart that has been re-created in the divine likeness will gush out in affection to every living thing. To such a soul the sky will bend in new beauty, the flower bloom in richer loveliness, birds sing with sweeter harmony, and—more than all—every human being will possess a deeper interest as one whom the Son of God died to redeem. Shall that death be in vain for any who read these pages?

Ethan was not enough of a reasoner to analyze the change in his feelings. He was satisfied to love, trust, and believe, without puzzling his weak intellect with subjects

that he did not understand. So when one wiser than he, in the way that man defines wisdom, attempted to argue him out of his faith in the Saviour, he could only answer, "I know he is willing to save me. I cannot tell how, but I feel it in my heart. I love him because he first loved me."

Shall we trace the history of Blind Ethan further, and travel with him until he reached that country where there is no darkness at all? It is not necessary. Our object has only been to portray the excellency of a hope in Jesus, and show its power to tinge the darkest earthly lot with heavenly radiance.